

Welfare Reform Principles

Building on the Landmark Welfare Reform Law of 1996

“Welfare needs a purpose: to provide for the needy, of course, but more than that, to salvage these, our fellow citizens, to make them self-sustaining and, as quickly as possible, independent of welfare. We should measure welfare’s success by how many people leave welfare, not by how many are added.” -- Ronald Reagan

Promote Work to Foster Independence.

House Republicans transformed the nation’s failed welfare system into a work-based program that has moved millions of recipients off the rolls and into jobs. We converted welfare offices of the past into job placement centers today. The results have been remarkable. Since 1996, the number of able-bodied welfare recipients working in jobs has tripled to the highest level ever recorded. Nearly 7 million former recipients are off welfare rolls and leading independent lives. House Republicans will make encouraging even more welfare recipients to work the centerpiece of our plan for reauthorizing welfare reform.

Improve Child Well-Being by Lifting Millions More out of Poverty.

Despite predictions of catastrophic hunger and poverty in 1996, millions of families and children have escaped the cycle of welfare dependency. In less than six years, hunger among children has been cut in half. Additionally, welfare reform has helped lift nearly 3 million children out of poverty, and decreased the poverty rate for black children to the lowest level in U.S. history. Child support collections – payments from noncustodial parents to support their own children instead of having them rely on welfare – have increased 75 percent. House Republicans will develop new initiatives to further reduce child poverty and enhance children’s opportunities for a better future.

Foster Healthy Marriages and Strengthen Families.

Independent studies show one of the most effective ways to reduce child poverty and improve child well-being is by promoting healthy, stable marriages. The 1996 Welfare Reform Law helped reverse a decades-old trend of explosive out-of-wedlock births. The number of children living in single-mother homes has declined, while the share of children living in married-couple families has increased, particularly among minority families. House Republicans will continue to promote welfare policies that reduce illegitimacy and divorce, while strengthening marriage and the family.

Boost Personal Incomes and Improve Quality of Life.

After 30 years and nearly \$6 trillion spent fighting the War on Poverty, the government policy of simply giving cash benefits has failed both the recipients and the taxpayers. Since 1996, personal income among working welfare recipients has increased. Hourly wages for the lowest-paid workers have risen after falling for two decades. Mothers heading families whose total income is below \$21,000 more than doubled their earnings. House Republicans will build on these successes by developing additional plans to place recipients on long-term career paths, promoting self-esteem and an improved quality of life.